

VZCZCXRO6810  
RR RUEHROV  
DE RUEHDS #1187/01 1171505  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 271505Z APR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0276  
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001187

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

AF FOR DAS YAMAMOTO, AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/26/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ET](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: IMPRISONED CUD LEADER READY TO PROMOTE  
RECONCILIATION

REF: ADDIS ABABA ADDIS ABABA 926

Classified By: Charge Janet Wilgus for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Pastor Daniel of the NGO Justice For All, Prison Fellowship Ethiopia, has informed post that imprisoned Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) leader Yacob Hailemariam agreed to write a conciliatory note to the Prime Minister as a first act in beginning dialogue with the GOE.  
END SUMMARY.

LOOKING FOR CRACKS IN A STONEWALL  
-----

12. (C) PAO met with Pastor Daniel Gebreselassie, president of the 15-year-old NGO Justice For All/Prison Fellowship Ethiopia, and his colleague, Dr. Aweto Simesso (professor who taught at Stanford University for many years), to obtain a debriefing of Daniel's recent visit with the imprisoned CUD leaders April 25. The meeting was a follow up to previous discussions between Charge Huddleston, Pastor Daniel, Dr. Aweto and post's public affairs officer, at which Pastor Daniel agreed to speak with the CUD leaders about reducing political tension by making a statement that acknowledges positive changes over the past several months. Such a statement could help raise the prospects of a speedy and fair trial and normalize the political climate in Ethiopia. Since being charged with treason and genocide, CUD leaders have refused to accept the legal authority of the GOE to try them. They have also vehemently opposed the reestablishment of the CUD Party (CUDP), branding the pro-engagement organizers as traitors.

13. (C) Pastor Daniel, who enjoys good relations with civil society and the government (he is a member of the Presidential Pardon Board of Ethiopia), frequently visits the jail as part of his mission to comfort prisoners and assist in their legal processes. He accompanied Louise Arbour, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to Kaliti prison April 25 and met with six detainees including CUD leaders Hailu Shawel and Yacob Hailemarim, Organization for Social Justice Executive Director Netsanet Demessie, and three others. Berhanu Nega, former CUD mayor-elect of Addis Ababa, was reportedly upset by what he called Charge Huddleston's "selling out democracy" and refused to meet with Arbour's group. (Septel will report on Arbour's impressions from her visit.)

A POSSIBLE LEVERAGE POINT  
-----

14. (C) During his trip to Kaliti, Pastor Daniel met privately with Yacob Hailemariam (a former prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha). Yacob complained that he, and many of those locked up, felt abandoned by the CUD parliamentary and Addis Ababa city council members who were attempting to re-register the party.

He commented that all he was hearing from the Americans was the request for a speedy trial. Why was the U.S., he queried, not pushing for reconciliation? Pastor Daniel took the opportunity to encourage him to write a letter of reconciliation to the Prime Minister. The letter, Pastor Daniel explained, may be interpreted by the GOE as a sign of remorse, and could open the way for a positive response by the government. (Note: EPRDF leadership, including the Prime Minister, expressed on various occasions to embassies that the jailed CUD leadership needed to acknowledge that their actions resulted in civil unrest and express 'remorse' before any type of leniency could be contemplated by the GOE. End Note.) Yacob told Pastor Daniel that he should come back next week at which time he would have a draft.

#### A RECIPE FOR RECONCILIATION?

15. (C) Pastor Daniel will return to Kaliti next week to review any draft statements and provide Yacob with talking points which could serve as guideposts to craft a note to the Prime Minister. PAO and Pastor Daniel discussed the following points:

- concern about the future of Ethiopia and willingness to cooperate with the Government to reduce tensions so that the nation can move forward;

ADDIS ABAB 00001187 002 OF 002

- recognition that the EPRDF won the elections;

- willingness to work within the constitution to promote peace, democracy and prosperity in Ethiopia.

#### COMMENT

16. (C) We have no indication as yet as to whether the above points will be acceptable to Yacob. Nor is it clear if any among the imprisoned CUD share his willingness to make a conciliatory statement. Yacob's initiative, however, is a welcome crack in the seemingly monolithic, anti-engagement posture of the CUD, and might influence other detainees. Depending on what Yacob sends to the PM, and the GOE's response, Yacob might be helpful in building bridges between CUDP leaders inside and outside jail, facilitate engagement and secure favorable terms and or pardons for himself and his CUD confreres.

WILGUS